Lafayette Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, CA 94549

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President: Ray Peters **Newsletter Editor:** Nancy Midwood

FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

Our newest landmark is a portion of the Lafayette United Methodist Church, on Moraga Road. Some of the building and the belfry are remaining from Lafayette's third schoolhouse, built in 1893. The city officially declared the landmark status on October 10, 1983.

The Church is presently extensively renovating the structure; as churches are wont, they're short of money.

It is hoped that all members of the Society, and their friends, will attend the Landmarks Day celebration the Church is planning. Bits of the old redwood used in the construction (this is virgin redwood, by the way) will be sold in order to help with the cost of renovation.

Stop by on Landmarks Day and look around. Buy a piece of wood for your library--from a tree that was a sapling at the time of Christ. (Who says Lafayette history doesn't go back very far?)

It may be their church, but it's our school too. Let's help them keep it!

Historically,

Ray J. Peters, President

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IMPORTANT DATES ----

January 31 at 7:30 p.m., Lafayette Library: "Oral History"

February 28 at 8:00 p.m., Lafayette School: "Port Chicago"

March 10, 10:00 a.m to 2:00 p.m, Lafayette Methodist Church: "Landmark Day"

April 24, Veteran's Hall: Annual Meeting of the Lafayette Historical Society

---- circle them on your calendar!!!!

"Megalopolis by the Bay," a history course

taught by Dr. Charles Wollenberg will be held at the Oakland Museum from 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesdays in the Lecture Hall, February 7 through May 1. Tuition is free and students may register at the initial class meeting.

Material covered includes the impact of the earthquake and fire on settlement of the region; the construction of water, energy, rail and ferry systems, and their effects on metropolitan growth; the impact on settlement patterns of the automobile, highway, and bridge projects; the boom and bust periods of the 1920s and 1930s; demographic changes due to World War II; the great sprawl; the protest decade; the burgeoning of Silicon Valley ; and more. The course is offered by Vista College and co-sponsored by the Oakland Museum History Department.

Archives Acquisitions

Artifacts found inside the walls of the Third Schoolhouse (1893 - 1941) during construction renovation of the Lafayette Unified Methodist Church were presented to L.H.S. by Bob Munn. Artifacts found include several quarts of light-weight chalk, a square nail, a tadding shuttle, and two sketches: one titled "The Presidential Range from the West" with "Lafayet" written in the corner.

The L.H.S. Board voted at its January, 1984, meeting to purchase, for the archives, a copy of Dorothy Mutnick's book "Clippings from the Contra Costa Gazette" covering the years 1862 - 1864.

The Contra Costa Historical Society

has acquired, as a gift, the remaining 87 copies of the 1974 reprint of Slocum's authoritative History of Contra Costa County, California. This meticulous fascimile reprint of an 1882 work of 710 pages is a big book filled with fact, anecdote, and personal pioneer stories that reveal the origin, development and growth of Contra Costa County. Many pictures of pioneers are included. You may order copies for immediate delivery as long as they last for $30 plus $2.75 shipping and $1.95 sales tax each. Send your check to Contra Costa County Historical Society, P.O. Box 821, Concord, CA 94522, and include your name and address with your order.

Lafayette Landmark Day - March 10

March 10 has been declared Lafayette Landmark Day at the request of citizens of the Lafayette United Methodist Landmark Fund. The Lafayette Historical Society has been asked to assist in this celebration of historic landmarks, which will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the church grounds at 955 Moraga Road. The nucleus of the church building is the old Lafayette Grammar School and belfry, built in 1893, and that portion of the church was designated an historical landmark by resolution 85 - 83 of the Lafayette City Council on October 10, 1983. The Lafayette Historical Society, which requested the landmark status, will host a display booth of books, postcards, and old photographs. The society also will have self-guided tour information available for those who wish to visit historical sites in Lafayette. Since Landmark Day will double as a pledge day for funding construction of the church building, everyone who makes a donation will have a chance to ring the 1983 bell.

Port Chicago is the topic

of our February 28th meeting, which will be hels at 8 p.m. in the auditorium of the Lafayette School on School Street (accross the street from the Town Hall). The speaker will be Wayne Korsinen, who gave a talk to the Society on Nortonville in 1980. He is a teacher of history at Antioch High School.

Wayne Korsinen portrays the voice and spirit of Port Chicago. His presentation unfolds the tragic story of how this small Contra Costa County town was badly damaged by, but survived, a wartime explosion at an ammunition pier, just two miles away. The blast was the most powerful man-made detonation prior to Hiroshima. This 1944 blast involved 10,000 tons of explosives and it killed 323 servicemen and wounded 500 others nearby. The speech also uncovers how the U.S. Navy launched a 13 year campaign against Port Chicago...today a ghost town.

Circle your calendar now for "Port Chicago", the Society's winter meeting on February 28 at 8 p.m. at Lafayette School.

"How to Develop an Oral History"

will be the topic addressed by Elaine Dorfman at the Lafayette Library on Tuesday, January 31 at 7:30 p.m. All interested persons are invited to attend this event sponsored by the Friends of Lafayette Library.

"Lamorinda Memories," a calendar for 1984

illustrated with historic photographs, has been published by Lamorinda National Bank, written and designed by Robert and Emily Tatum. Photographs of the Old Tunnel, the Pioneer Store, the Third School, Town Hall, the Wayside Inn, the blacksmith, and Lafayette school teacher Miss Bickerstaff, are among those described in some detail by the authors. The majority of the old photographs used were from our Society's files. Complimentary copies, while they last, may be obtained at the Lamorinda National Bank or at the Chamber of Commerce.

The Nominating Committee

seeks volunteers for service on the L.H.S. Board of Directors for the upcoming election which will be held at the annual meeting on April 24. If you would like to volunteer or nominate someone, please call Ray Peters at 283-5256.

The Annual Meeting of the Lafayette Historical Society

will be on April 24, 1984, at the Veteran's Hall, on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. In addition to elections, the evening includes a potluck supper followed by a slide presentation of Lafayette and county history by Allessandro Baccari who has established museums for Eureka Federal Savings.

Save April 24 for this important event!!!!

Lafayette Not So Long Ago

was the title of a photo display at Conti Camera Shop at 3518C Mt. Diablo Boulevard. The exhibit, which included such scenes as the Wayside Inn, the blacksmith's shop and the rodeo, was arranged by Alice Breckling. Coming next will be a photo display of old trains.

Lafayette Historical Society Books

Both La Fayette - A Pictorial History, at $6, and The Improvers of Lafayette, at $9.95, are available through Lafayette Book Store, Conti Camera, and the Chamber of Commerce. They make great gifts and provide a continuing source of income for the Society.

Report on Lafayette Landmarks and Other Places of Historical Interest

---by Jim Craig 1-10-84---

There are three catagories of historical sites in Lafayette:

A. Designated historical landmarks by resolution of the Lafayette City Council.

B. Sites and structures located by appropriate plaques, but not designated legal landmarks.

C. Other sites, some indefinitely located.

A. By January 1984 five sites have been designated historical landmarks in Lafayette and bear descriptive plaques. Information on the origin of the plaquing and reference to the appropriate Lafayette City Council resolution regarding landmark status are given below:

1. Old Town Plaza Corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Road.

Plaque 6/13/70 by Rotary Club of Lafayette

Landmark 5/10/76, Lafayette City Council Resolution 36-76

Other: Grist mill wheel plaque 8/13/55 by Lafayette Lions Club and flagpole dedicated to memory of Lafayette Vietnam War Veterans by the parents of Timothy A. Thomas, 11/11/82.

2. Wayside Inn 3521 Golden Gate Way

Plaque 6/13/70 by Rotary Club of Lafayette

Landmark 5/10/76, Lafayette City Council Resolution 36-76

3. Pioneer Store 3535 Plaza Way

Plaque 6/13/70 by Rotary Club of Lafayette

Landmark 5/10/76, Lafayette City Council Resolution 36-76

4. Lafayette Town Hall Corner Moraga Rd. and School Street

Plaque 10/14/78 by Lafayette Historical Society

Landmark 4/3/78, Lafayette City Council Resolution 33-78

5. Lafayette Grammar School 955 Moraga Rd.

Plaque 5/6/73 by Lafayette Historical Society

Landmark 10/10/83, by Lafayette City Council Resolution 85-83

NOTE: Landmark includes portion of Methodist Church and belfry. The Deodar Cedar in front of church was also plaqued 5/6/73.

B. Sites of historical interest (not designated landmark), bearing descriptive plaques are:

1. Geils Building 3531 Plaza Way

Plaque 6/29/71 by Soroptimist Club of Lafayette-Orinda

2. Bicentennial Liberty tree 950 Dewing Ave.

Honor of Eleanor Richards Lyon by Acalanes Chapter of DAR 11/18/74

3. Lafayette Cemetary 3285 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Plaque Nov 11, 1979 by Lafayette Historical Society

4. Elam and Margaret Brown Homesite 985 Hough Avenue

Monument bearing plaque, 1981, by Lafayette Historical Society

C. Sites of historical interest. These have no locating plaques, but are described in the Lafayette Historical Guide.

1. Juan Bernal house. One-half mile north on Happy Valley Road.

2. James Bickerstaff home. 3615 Mt. Diablo Blvd - Diablo Foods Market. Has redwood tree in front of market planted by his daughter, a pioneer school teacher in this locality.

3. Indian Burial Grounds. Oakland Avenue-Lafayette Circle

4. Garrett Building. 3565 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Extensive remodelling going on in this location designed to extend the architectural motif exemplified by this structure.

5. Second School House. 3535 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Recommendations

1. Landmarks should have the number of the designating Lafayette City Council Resolution added. Could be accomplished by small plaque placed below the existing plaque.

ASSEMBLY BILL PROPOSES $10 MILLION FOR LOCAL HISTORY PROJECTS

We have received a letter from Assemblyman Sam Farr (Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties) advising us of Assembly Bill AB 2099 that proposes a Parklands Bond Act of 1984 for $370 million general obligation bonds for park and recreation facilities. Included in that Bill is $10 million for grants for local historical resources projects. These funds, if available, would be allocated competitively statewide, pursuant to criteria proposed by the Office of Historical Preservation and approval of the Resource Secretary.

Assemblyman Farr's letter states that this is the first time that state grant monies have been specifically earmarked for local historical projects.

It would seem advantageous to historical projects in this area to support this bill and the Bond Act should it get to the ballot in the 1984 Primary Election.

If you agree, you may wish to contact your Assemblyman and Senator (Baker and Boatwright or Bates and Petris, depending upon your location) at the State Capitol, Sacramento, CA. 95814 ,to show support for placing the Parklands Bond Act of 1984 on the June ballot.

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WALKING TOURS

Conducting walking tours of the historical landmarks of Lafayette, and telling the history of our town to its residents (both young and old) and to its visitors, is an important service provided by our Society.

We need people to guide tours; if you are interested, training will be provided.

For more information, contact Mary McIvor (284-5712) or Betsy Willcuts (283-0706).

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Stanley School seeks pictures

from the past. To celebrate Stanley School's 30th anniversary, a special yearbook will be printed. If you have any pictures from Stanley's earliest years, particularly the first year, they may be copied for inclusion in this publication. The originals will be carefully handled and returned to their owners after being copied.

For details, call Joan Merryman at 283-0659.

To meet the publication deadline, pictures must be copied by Feb. 17.

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YOUR NEWSLETTER

If you have any suggestions, any information of local historical interest; if there are any articles or news you would like to share with the members of our Society, this newsletter is your means to do just that. We welcome your participation.

Please send your material to: Lafayette Historical Society, P. O. Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549.

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